



[3411-15-P]

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Information Collection: Generic Information Collection Clearance for STEW-MAP, the Stewardship Mapping and Assessment Project

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice; request for comment.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the Forest Service is seeking comments from all interested individuals and organizations on the new information collection *Generic Information Collection Clearance for STEW-MAP, the Stewardship Mapping and Assessment Project*.

DATES: Comments must be received in writing on or before **[INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]** to be assured of consideration. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

ADDRESSES: Comments concerning this notice should be addressed to Lynne Westphal, USDA Forest Service, 1033 University Place, Suite 360, Evanston, IL 60201.

Comments also may be submitted via facsimile to 847-866-9506 or by e-mail to lwestphal@fs.fed.us. Please put "Comments re: STEW-MAP" in the subject line.

Comments submitted in response to this notice may be made available to the public through relevant websites and upon request. For this reason, please do

not include in your comments information of a confidential nature, such as sensitive personal information or proprietary information. If you send an e-mail comment, your e-mail address will be automatically captured and included as part of the comment that is placed in the public docket and made available on the Internet. Please note that responses to this public comment request containing any routine notice about the confidentiality of the communication will be treated as public comments that may be made available to the public notwithstanding the inclusion of the routine notice.

The public may inspect the draft supporting statement and/or comments received at USDA Forest Service, 1033 University Place, Suite 360, Evanston, IL during normal business hours. Visitors are encouraged to call ahead to 847-866-9311 to facilitate entry to the building. The public may request an electronic copy of the draft supporting statement and/or any comments received be sent via return e-mail. Requests should be e-mailed to *lwestphal@fs.fed.us*.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lynne Westphal at 847-866-9311 extension 11. Individuals who use telecommunication devices for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 twenty-four hours a day, every day of the year, including holidays.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Generic Information Collection Clearance for STEW-MAP, the Stewardship Mapping and Assessment Project

OMB Number: 0596-NEW

Type of Request: New

Abstract: Local environmental stewardship groups are essential for ensuring the vibrancy of natural areas in urban environments. Urban natural areas provide a range of benefits and services including stormwater management, air pollution removal, urban heat island mitigation, carbon storage, wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities, stress reduction, aesthetic beauty, noise reduction, increased property values, and reduced energy use. The work of civic environmental stewards leverages the efforts of local government officials in maintaining these resources, especially in lean budget times. Civic stewardship organizations, including nonprofits, faith-based groups, formal and informal community groups, and coalitions, are often involved in, for example, planting trees, organizing community gardens, offering environment-themed classes, engaging with local officials on behalf of the environment, monitoring plants or animals, and cleaning up nearby parks or natural areas. People who do this work are stewards of their local environments, even if they do not normally use the word “steward” or think of what they do as “stewardship.”

In urban areas, the roles of civic environmental stewards and their levels of engagement and commitment are often not understood by land managers and other decision makers. This means that the valuable services they provide are not appreciated and built on to full advantage. In addition, stewards themselves may not be aware of others doing similar work in their area so there may be lost opportunities for collaboration between groups.

The purpose of this research is to gather information on civic stewardship groups and their efforts such as where they work, the types of projects they focus

on, how they are organize. This information will be summarize and made publicly available online for use by policy makers, land managers, environmental professionals, the general public, stewards themselves, and other urban resource management stakeholders.

There are three phases to a STEW-MAP project:

- Phase One (Census) is a census of stewardship groups in the target city or region, essentially putting together a master list of known stewardship groups and their contact information.
- Phase Two (Survey) is a survey which is distributed to all of the organizations identified in Phase One to collect information about what they work on, how their group is structured, where they work, and what other groups they collaborate with.
- Phase Three (Follow-Up Interviews) is follow-up interviews with key longstanding organizations identified during Phase Two to collect more detailed information about their organizational histories.

A primary goal of STEW-MAP is to visualize stewardship activities across the urban landscape. The geographic information provided by stewardship groups on the survey (Phase Two) will allow the researchers to do a spatial analysis of where stewardship groups are working, identify “gaps” where little to no stewardship is being done, and provide locally relevant geographic information like what kinds of stewardship groups are working in particular places. This geographic information will be displayed on maps to show stewards, local land managers, policy makers, and other interested stakeholders how stewardship work

is distributed across the region with the goal of encouraging collaboration, building innovative partnerships, increasing organizational capacities, and generally making stewardship efforts more effective.

All of the information from STEW-MAP will help planners, natural resource decision makers, land managers, and the general public work across property jurisdictions, management regimes and political boundaries to conserve, protect, and manage urban natural resources effectively. It will also be used to enhance local resource management efforts by helping public officials, land managers, and civic stewards connect to local stewardship groups.

STEW-MAP is being led by researchers from the Forest Service in partnership with researchers from universities and nongovernment organizations. The exact makeup of the research team will vary from location to location where STEW-MAP is conducted. The Forest Service, Research and Development branch is authorized to conduct basic scientific research to improve the health of forests and rangelands involving State, Federal, Tribal agencies, and private landowners across multiple jurisdictions including in urban areas. The study is aligned with the U. S. Department of Agriculture policy of an “all-lands approach” to resource management, which “requires land managers to work across jurisdictions and land-use types, viewing forests landscapes as an integrated whole, both ecologically and socially” (National Report on Sustainable Forests, 2010). This all-lands approach applies to urban ecosystems as well. Our project goals are consistent with the Forest Service, Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) program, which focus on urban forest ecosystems and the role of

stewardship and trail connections to parks and public lands that promote health and sustainability for urban residents. This study seeks to identify opportunities for stewardship organizations to better collaborate and, thus, be more effective in the stewardship of urban natural areas.

Due to local geographical and/or cultural differences, and to meet the needs of any particular collaborative effort, we anticipate that there may be changes to the survey and interview questions and perhaps in methodology to accommodate the unique requirements of individual communities; therefore, we are submitting this request for a Generic Information Collection Clearance for the information collection activities associated with the STEW-MAP program in order to afford us the flexibility of tailoring the information collection activities and instruments to each location, and to apply lessons learned from previous STEW-MAP efforts and locations to future efforts and locations.

Affected Public: Representatives from civic environmental stewardship groups, and from State, local, or Tribal Governments.

Estimate of Burden Per Response: 15 to 60 minutes

Estimated Annual Number of Respondents:

Phase One (Census): 600

Phase Two (Survey): 15,000

Phase Three (Follow-up Interviews): 300

Estimated Annual Number of Responses per Respondent: 1

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 7,925 hours

Comment is Invited:

Comment is invited on: (1) whether this collection of information is necessary for the stated purposes and the proper performance of the functions of the Agency, including whether the information will have practical or scientific utility; (2) the accuracy of the Agency's estimate of the burden of the collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (3) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (4) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

All comments received in response to this notice, including names and addresses when provided, will be a matter of public record. Comments will be summarized and included in the submission request toward Office of Management and Budget approval.

Jimmy L. Reaves
Deputy Chief,
Research & Development

August 26, 2014
(Date)

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